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QUESTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALL PERSONS SUBJECTED TO ANY FORM OF DETENTION OR IMPRISONMENT

Written statement submitted by the International Association of Educators for World Peace, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[5 April 1996]

1. In spite of much awareness of human rights and claims by various Governments, individuals throughout the world continue to suffer for their beliefs and convictions. In this context, the attention of our organization has been drawn to the situation prevailing in Pakistan and particularly in Sindh, the southern province. It appears that the situation of human rights is worrying throughout Pakistan but Sindh, being economically vital for the rest of the country, tends to suffer more in terms of exploitation and subsequent repression against its genuine representatives and defenders.

2. The International Association of Educators for World Peace has received direct evidence and studied the reports of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Human Rights International, Amnesty International, Asia Watch and others on numerous cases of human rights violations by the authorities. IAEWP has noted that the situation is further aggravated by the organized armed resistance of a linguistic minority, principally located in the urban centres of Sindh, whose aims and objectives are to struggle against the present Government as well as against the indigenous unarmed population.

3. It is further alleged that, for the sake of denouncing these abuses and trying to find a fair solution, a considerable number of Sindhis, political activists, students, intellectuals and ordinary citizens, are in prison. Some of them have been detained without trial for many years and denied proper legal and medical aid. The use of methods of interrogation ranging from intimidation, humiliation and severe beating to the hanging upside down of prisoners until a false confession is obtained and people being chained with handcuffs and leg fetters in solitary detention cells are common. Moreover, people are usually abducted, taken to unknown places of interrogation and very rarely come back alive, one reason being that they could testify about their experience.

4. Our organization was alarmed at the arrest, in November 1995, of Dr. Munawar Halepota, a Sindhi human rights activist, well known by all of us in this forum, who was detained by the Pakistan authorities for more than a month before being forcibly deported to the United Kingdom on 4 January 1996. IAEWP received a detailed account of Dr. Halepota's experience and includes in this document part of the inside story of his arrest, detention and subsequent release:

> "I was arrested on 28 November 1995, while on a private visit to Pakistan. At 11.00 p.m. in the night, my house was raided by about 50 armed men, with loaded rifles and other weapons, belonging to the police and security forces. I demanded to see the warrants of arrest but was told to get in the police vehicle without creating any problems. I was being taken to an unknown destination but I informed the arresting authorities that I hold a British passport. This stopped them in their tracks and I was taken back to the local Tando Allahyar police station. I was detained at the local police station for two days without any case registered against me.
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> "The initial FIR (First Information Report) was registered on 30 November 1995, and I was transferred to CIA (Criminal Investigation Agency) Centre in Hyderabad, where I was informed by the Superintendent of Police that uncivilized means, i.e. torture, will be used for interrogation. I was put in a cell with 11 other inmates including political activists, innocent civilians and criminals. The youngest was 14 years old and the oldest 70 years old. I witnessed them being tortured at various times. One of them was taken out of the cell. Later we learned that he had been killed in an encounter with the police, a phrase commonly used for those who are shot dead in cold blood without producing them before a court of law. A common practice in Sindh.
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> "On 4 December 1995, I was handed over to the FIA (Federal Investigation Agency) and transferred to Islamabad for further interrogation. The authorities tried to implicate me in anti-State activities, including terrorism, handling explosives, etc. which carry the death penalty. This is a common practice in Pakistan, especially against the Sindhi people, as we do not have the same rights as the rest of the population. I was kept in a cold damp room in the basement, provided only with one blanket and made to sleep on a solid concrete floor in freezing temperatures. As a result I developed a severe chest infection with very high fever, and was denied any medical aid.

"On 18 December 1995, I was transferred to the Central Prison in Rawalpindi, under judicial custody, and put in a death cell. It is a small cell, approximately 8 x 10 feet, with bars on the door and ventilators without any protection against the freezing temperatures and hardly any water for sanitation. I was kept locked up all the time, made to sleep on the concrete floor and given only a couple of blankets to protect against the freezing temperatures. My health was deteriorating. I developed severe back pain, and was still denied medical aid.

"For almost a month, I was detained incommunicado, denied any visits from my lawyers and family. At the same time my family and friends were not aware of my whereabouts, my safety or well-being. On 4 January 1996, I was taken from the Rawalpindi Jail by the FIA officials and forcibly deported to United Kingdom. I was informed that the cases against me have been dropped because of lack of evidence, but was not given anything in writing. I must thank the international community, including the Centre for Human Rights, for their intervention and efforts in saving my life."

5. IAEWP draws the attention of the Commission to the fact that the situation of human rights in Pakistan remains very alarming on many fronts which all converge ultimately on mounting terrorism and the use of methods of repression and excessive use of force by the army and security forces.

6. Since Pakistan itself advocates its efforts in trying to promote democracy and human rights, in and outside Pakistan, we would like to urge the Government of Pakistan, member of this Commission, to adopt and ratify at the earliest the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the corresponding Optional Protocols.